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Historical memories on slavery in southern Somalia and Cabo Delgado, Mozambique: slavery versus forced labor

Memórias históricas sobre a escravidão no sul da Somália e em Cabo Delgado, Moçambique: escravidão versus trabalho forçado

Memorias históricas sobre la esclavitud en el sur de Somalia y Cabo Delgado, Mozambique: la esclavitud frente al trabajo forzado

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Living memories of past movements and migrations in and out of the Querimbas Islands, especially Ibo Island, are apt to present some surprises. When talking about slavery, some elders' shared memories sometimes seem to be defensive, serving to justify the practice of slavery rather than decrying it. This may be ascribed to several factors. External observers often look at dependency interrelations in poor areas in ways that do not coincide with the views held by local people and there may be relevant historical reasons to account for the different perceptions. The reasons which lie behind the viewpoint held by some Ibo islanders would seem to be related to past events and conflicts that occurred many decades after slavery was abolished. This paper will explore some such reasons by inquiring into the ways people were recruited as forced laborers and looking into the policies that facilitated the lives of servants as opposed to people with autonomous occupations who could be coerced into forced laborer.

Keywords: domestic slavery, forced labor, memories, migration, domestic servant, labor stratification

Alguns conteúdos de memórias vivas de mobilidade e migrações passadas dentro e fora da Ilha Querimbas, especialmente da Ilha Ibo, são algo inesperados. Quando se fala de escravatura, as memórias partilhadas de alguns anciãos parecem por vezes ser defensivas e justificar a prática da escravatura em vez de a descartar. Isto pode ser atribuído a vários fatores. Os observadores externos olham frequentemente para as inter-relações de dependência existentes nas zonas pobres de formas que não coincidem com as opiniões da população local e podem existir razões históricas relevantes para que isto aconteça. As motivações subjacentes a este ponto de vista parecem também estar relacionadas com acontecimentos do passado ocorridos muitas décadas depois da abolição da escravidão. Este artigo irá explorar algumas dessas razões inquirindo sobre a forma como as pessoas eram recrutadas como trabalhadores forçados e sobre as políticas que facilitavam a vida aos servos, em oposição aos trabalhadores forçados.

Palavras-chave: escravatura doméstica, trabalho forçado, memórias, migração, trabalhadores domésticos, estratificação do trabalho

Algunos de los contenidos de los recuerdos vivos de la movilidad y las migraciones pasadas dentro y fuera de la isla de Querimbas, especialmente de la isla de Ibo, son un tanto inesperados. Al hablar de la esclavitud, los recuerdos compartidos por algunos ancianos a veces parecen estar a la defensiva y justifican la práctica de la esclavitud en lugar de descartarla. Esto puede atribuirse a varios factores. Los observadores externos suelen ver las interrelaciones de dependencia que existen en las zonas pobres de formas que no coinciden con los puntos de vista de la población local, y puede haber razones históricas relevantes para ello. Las motivaciones que subyacen a esta visión también parecen estar relacionadas con acontecimientos pasados que ocurrieron muchas décadas después de la abolición de la esclavitud. Este artículo explorará algunas de estas razones analizando cómo se reclutaba a la gente como trabajadores forzados y las políticas que facilitaban la vida de los siervos, en contraposición a los trabajadores forzados.

Palavras clave: esclavitud domestica, trabajo forzado, memorias, migraciones, trabajadores domesticos/as, estratificación laboral

Introduction

Memories of past events can be telescoped through more recent events, distorting oral reports of the past. Indeed, this is a process through which memories of past events, sharing similar connotations but occurring at very different times, tend to become conflated and epitomized in the collective memory in one event (Miller, 1980, p. 17; Spear, 1981, p. 166, 172). This mechanism of memorizing may conflate memories of events long gone with more recent ones; thus, the details of more recent events overlap and mingle with those of earlier events; the remaining narrative details are a mixture of the two different past occurrences. Descriptions of events which have either left the strongest impression or been recounted, for whatever reason, more frequently than others, serve as a catalyst, fusing the earlier and later events into a single stereotyped narrative. This narrative serves as the lens through which all other similar looking events are observed. In other words, the narrative of

a later event is also used to describe events which occurred much earlier in which some details of the recent events may be grafted (Declich, 2018, 549).

This paper arises from reflections stemming from two field projects - in Ibo Island (Mozambique) and in Gosha along the Juba River (southern Somalia) - collecting living memories concerning slavery. Data from the two research projects obviously prompted a comparison and are seminal considerations on the topic.

While gathering memories of domestic slavery in Ibo Island, the thing that first impressed me, when I came to compare the two countries, was that, contrary to my expectations, a number of those I interviewed did not deprecate slavery, even though some of their forefathers, and indeed fathers, had been comprados, in other words, bought. Comprado was one of the words used to point out slaves. Yet, and especially in the Island of Ibo, some people claimed that every white family had some black family members. Some of such families are now in Portugal while others are still in Ibo.

My preconceived idea, and, indeed, also the ones embedded within the Mozambiquan independence narratives against colonialism[1] was that slavery, or being enslaved, in all cases, would have been a harsh experience and not a desirable condition. But this assumption was challenged on the account that sometimes people preferred to be the dependents of those who were strong and wealthy enough to protect them, especially from the raids of warrior groups like the Ngoni, rather than finding themselves elsewhere, free but defenseless. Thus, some people preferred to actually offer themselves as slaves to families of wealthy compounds rather than remain on their own but unprotected. The walls of the compound of a wealthy master seemed to be a desirable fence separating an internal safe area from an external environment fraught with dangers. In addition, an elderly woman revealed that a slave would always have some flour for his or her meals, which was not always the case in times of famine, for people living outside the compound, albeit non enslaved (Declich, 2017, p. 190). In other words, being enslaved in Ibo was depicted as a condition in which people could be sheltered from uncertainties and insecurity.

Slavery and dependent labor

Several classic authors have clarified that the concept of a slave and slavery is not univocal, and, in many ways, it is a historical product of specific socio-economic contexts. As Davis (1989, 1984) highlighted, the conception of slave developed in the Western countries was deeply based in the specific notion of freedom and equality, stemmed from the illuminist trends in which social forces were looking for opposing and overcoming the feudal regimes. Discussions on how and why to overcome the dichotomy slavery/freedom in the intellectual discourse (Wimmler and Wiegmink 2024) were also preceded by studies on the "linkages between enslavement, the legacies of slavery and changing ideas of liberty" in specific historical periods (Bellagamba 2017). Thus, emic concepts of dependency go along with emic concepts of freedom.

The idea of freed and unfree stemmed from the experience of the "plantation slavery" model developed in the Americas, the West Indies and French colonies may

[1] Fontes: Some of such narratives can be epitomized by the exhibition of the Maputo Museu da Revolução which is now closed.

then not apply to societies where slavery developed differently, as the experience of maroon societies in several areas of the Western Indian Ocean shows (Abungu 2024; Coret 2021; Declich 2020). More recently historian of Africa, Joseph Miller (2012:2) invites us to reconsider "not only what we think about slavery but also the deep-seated assumptions that underlie how we can think most comprehendingly, and hence most productively, beyond existing understandings of slaving" and also that slavery in the historical past "might have differed from the way in which we have come to think about it now" (Miller, 2012:11).

In Ibo, the way local language addressed different kinds of slaves has an embedded hierarchy. The name for male slave was ntwana, while ncakazi, indicated the female slave with the special task of being a personal slave of the mistress of the house. The child of a female domestic slave was called wana wa nsano, in the Mwani language, as nsano indicate 'a domestic female slave who had privileged relations with a master. Their children were not always recognized as legitimate children of the master[2] and sometimes they were ascribed an official African father.[3] As these children were also wana wa nlungwana (children of a free man) they had an ambiguous status. Instead, children born from domestic servants/ slaves living in the courtyard (quintal) of a household of free people, were referred to as wana wa nluwani (children of the quintal).[4] Those children, born from a relative of the master's family and a slave woman were pointed out as wana wa mwenye (children of the master). The way to nominate the slaves shows a hierarchy among the people depending on whether they were directly related to the owner.

It is clear that the characteristics of the regimes of dependent labor are not the same everywhere and that the ways different societies manage structural conditions in specific socio-economic and ecological environments may not overlap. Nor it is possible to simply imagine an emancipation from certain forms of dependency as developing all the same way.

Notwithstanding, I was obviously spurred to compare these points of view with memories of the experiences of forced laborers in Cabo Delgado (Mozambique) which are generally recollected as extremely harsh and unpleasant. Narratives of forced laborers' experiences describe young and older men being wrenched from their homes, obliged to work for six months in sisal plantations under extremely difficult conditions and subject to cruel punishments if they failed to finish the work they were assigned. The most common punishment was the palmatoria, that meant being beaten repeatedly on the palms of the hands with a wooden tool, a sort of a spade with rounded wooden spikes. A laborer could be beaten 20 times on each hand. People who underwent palmatoria still had to finish their work with aching hands. When the forced laborers were discharged after the conscription period their salary was reduced by the amount needed for tax payments.[5] Some young people were successful in fleeing their homes before the press-ganging was enforced, thereby managing to evade conscription. Memories

[2] In Da Conceição, Entre o mar e a terra, p. 207.
[3] Da Conceição, Entre o mar e a terra, p. 208.
[4] Eluwani is the Emakhuwa word for compound, quintal, and nluwani means "in the quintal". The same word root is used in Kimwani.
[5] Interviews groups of elders in Metuge, 9 September 2013, interview with Ajimo Niparacusa, 9 Sept 2013.

of forced labor - some of them from locations along the coast opposite the Querimbas Islands - were much more scathing than those of slavery, but were not conflated with slavery narratives, as happened in Somalia.

Memories of forced labor versus slavery in Somalia

Typically, when talking about slavery in the Somali Lower and Middle Juba, interviewees[6] mentioned events which clearly occurred during the Italian colonization along the Shebeli as if they were referring to earlier slavery events preceding the Italian colonization (Declich, 2002, pp.127-128, 236-237), thus making the two phenomena indistinguishable for the listener.

The Lower Juba was home to the main farms that employed forced agricultural labor on that river. There were about 25 concessions, scattered between five and forty miles from the river estuary with a total cultivated area of around 2,500 hectares[7]. For the most part, the farms were located in the area between Yontey and Jamaame of present-day Lower Juba. Although in Italy, the press sometimes denied the existence of forced labor (Salvadei, 1934), this type of work was widely practiced and by certainly unorthodox means (Del Boca, 1986: 203-205; Dower, 1944: 60). In Gosha along the Juba River such experiences for the Zigula began after the end of the war in Abyssinia[8] and lasted for approximately four years[9]. They therefore began much later than on the Scebeli, where they were already underway a decade earlier. In Gosha, local chiefs were used to provide lists of personnel to be recruited for companies. Those chosen had to go for the entire week to live and work at the defined company.

Each individual was assigned a piece of land that had to be worked on within the week. Those who did not finish the contracted work within the allotted time were subject to the whip (Dower, 1944: 60). The Italian resident of Jamaame township would make a round of inspection every weekend and whip those who had not finished the scheduled work[10].

Those who had not been able to complete it or who showed renege were transferred to the town of Jamaame, where they were hung on a pole in the sun for a duration ranging from half an hour to two hours[11]. The resident to whom this role was entrusted for a long time, Mr. Costa[12], was later interned by the British in a Kenyan prison camp (Pini, 1967). One of the farmers on Juba who particularly harassed the locals was Mr. Shafi, who had a farm in the Wirkoy locality. The same was later removed as a result of the too-repeated abuses[13].

Then, the role of local chiefs was to provide lists of people and in return, benefit from a certain immunity for themselves and their relatives. Certainly, the chiefs

[6] Interviews were carried out in 1988 the framework of a fieldwork dedicated to collect oral sources on the history of the area.
[7] Spencer, O.A. "A survey of agriculture in Somalia with special reference to the irrigated schemes of the Juba & Uebi Scebeli valleys," May 28, 1943.
[8] The Italo-Ethiopic war was in between 1935 and 1936.
[9] Field notes, o/sto: 23.
[10] Field notes, o/sto: 64
[11] Fieldnotes,o/sto:61;o/sto:63.
[12] Field notes, o/sto: 25.
[13] One does not find it hard to believe in the existence of such abuses, since it is known that among the Italians residing in Somalia there were violent and corrupt individuals, some of them with criminal records(Dower, 1944: 49).

did not always provide complete lists. The Italians therefore paid local spies to search for little-known people who slipped through the cracks and send them to forced labor. The spies would prepare lists and would be forced to report with the threat that their elders, who were normally exempt, would be brought to work instead. This tactic gave rise to many disagreements between families, as members of different family groups denounced each other as revenge against the spies. The whole process led to a generalized mutual distrust of each other, a suspicion that everyone was open to denunciation, and widespread individualism, as no one could trust each other anymore as was the case before the colony[14].

In some women's oral memoirs, great difficulty in having children is associated with the period of forced labor. These were either born dead or died within a short time.[15] Remarkably, a very low birth rate among workers and a very high infant mortality rate were also observed in reports of colonial agricultural activities during the fascist periodi[16]. The cruel treatment of mothers with children born during the colony is also recounted in other forms. Sometimes five children were entrusted to one woman while the others were at work. Mothers were forced not to breastfeed for a long time (four to six hours) and to hear their children crying from afar while they worked. This fact is considered even more burdensome because the traditional method of infant nourishing is demand feeding: mothers, while working, carry their babies on their backs and nurse them on demand, that is, whenever they cry. Immediately after giving birth, women were called back to work and the traditional forty-day postpartum rest period was not always observed[17]. Finally, one incident is recounted, "While the parents were at work, a python approached the area where the child was sleeping. The parents rushed over hearing the child's screams, but the owner did not let them approach because he wanted to see how the python ate the child and take pictures of it"[18]. We do not know whether this actually occurred, but the mere fact that it is persistently recalled testifies to the feelings of the group, with respect to that period, catalyzed around the episode.

During interviews about slavery with two men in Ibo,[19] both switched narratives and talked about the Ibo fortress which was used by the Portuguese to seclude and even finally kill many presumed or real political dissidents, especially in the period before the Independence of Mozambique. In this case, they preferred to talk about those as bad experiences of abuse rather than about slavery.

During colonial times (until just before 1974), one of the Ibo fortresses, the São João Baptista fortress, was used by the PIDE (Policia Internacional da Defensa do Estado) as a prison. Especially in the final years previous to the independence, people were often imprisoned before their offences could be proved, and even just sympathizing with the FRELIMO (Frente de Libertação de

[14] Fieldnotes, o/sto: 56
[15] Field notes, tr1.
[16] Serrazzanetti
[17] Field notes, tr.
[18] Field notes, q/sto: 44
[19] Interview with Ruben Osman, Ibo 11 sep 2008, pg. 12 and Interview with Athumani Taiari, Ibo 11 sep 2008. They were born in Ibo and have worked in the fortress during colonial times. We shall call them Ruben Osman and Athumani Taiari, invented names to protect their privacy.

Moçambique) movement was considered a crime so that people were tortured or killed on the mere suspicion of such political affiliation. This repressive activity was intensified in the lead up to independence.

One of the men interviewed, Ruben, the offspring of a relationship between a Banyan man and a woman of slave origin, successfully introduced into the business affairs of his father as a specialized artisan, had this to say about the period: "Some people continued slavery... but those were times in which nobody dared to open their mouths because the PIDE tortured people. You only had to make comments to be seized among those cocoa trees ... among those cocoa trees [behind the Ibo fortress] there were mass graves containing 10, 20 or even 30 people. Some [prisoners] were thrown alive after being cruelly beaten up. Some of those people asked us to leave them hidden in the bush so that, should they recover, they could escape. But for us this was very dangerous because if we had been discovered, the PIDE would have shot us."[20]

The experience of slavery, at least in the collective memory of Ibo, is sometimes revisited in comparison with the present condition of poverty. In the following statement there is a sort of nostalgia for the forms of protection and abundance of facilities which were available to slaves/servants, unlike the time that was to come.

Paulinha, an Ibo woman in her sixties, daughter of a European man and a servant of his house, described how women servants of slave descent who became pregnant by any of the males belonging to the quintal's patron faced two options: either they would be sent away, or they could be accepted into the household along with their offspring. Yet, she said: "Slaves could not go anywhere else [than here] as they did not know the land they came from. However, in those days one could find everything ..., it is now that things are difficult to find. There was everything, clothes and cloth and food because it was the masters themselves who saw to it.[21]

Questioning memories

A question naturally arises: why do living collective memories evolve in one way in certain contexts and differently in others? Specifically, to what extent the perception of enslavement is driven by the social stratification common in a certain context. Why is the perception of enslavement on islands like Ibo not recalled as negatively as it is elsewhere? This may be partly because, on that island, memories often refer to slaves who were part of a quintal, a compound-like domestic unit that included extended families of servants and slaves, all belonging to the master's household and raised accordingly.[22]

Memories of past slavery on the Ibo Island do not entail descriptions of hardship and punishment but, rather, feature a plethora of examples in which slaves/servants were occupied in different activities and errands, serving the masters' household: the personal slaves who devoted their daytime hours to serving and attending the master; the personal slaves, who made visits and performed errands for their master; the slaves of the veranda who only admitted visitors who would be welcomed by the master; the

[20] Interview with Ruben Osman, Ibo 11 sett September 2008, pg. 12. Interview with Athumani Taiari, Ibo 11 September 2008.
[21] Interview with Paulinha Peres, in her sixties, Ibo 12 sett 2013, pg. 4 and 5. We shall call her Paulinha to protect her per privacy.
[22] Declich's fieldnotes.

slaves who were leaders of the quintal and directed all the others, those who worked in the kitchen, those who were messengers of the owner, those who performed menial tasks, sometimes of the most unpleasant kind. Membership of a certain quintal did not exempt slaves from behaving with due deference to their owners. This would entail removing their shoes before entering the house, abstaining from communication with the master unless specifically requested, and personal slaves could only eat after the master's meal.[23] In most memories that I was able to collect, slavery was not considered as leading to hardship nearly as much as forced labor was.

If telescoping means looking at the most recent experiences through the lens of the earliest and viceversa, similar experiences and using the most recent narrative to refer to both the earlier and the later event, the case in Ibo Island seems to be different. Why? Was it that domestic slaves on the island enjoyed a different kind of treatment than elsewhere? Were the slaves residing on the island, and whose memories were still alive, mostly second-generation slaves who, while attached to specific wealthy families, could expect some form of social mobility as they were not liable to be sold outside?. Or were there some comparative advantages in being domestic slaves in the Querimbas islands as opposed to somewhere else?

Slave status is described as a fact that could not be avoided and, sometimes, depended on the condition of poverty. Lady Hawa Athumani, one organizer of the female initiation rituals (riga) in the island, who was thirteen years old when the Companhia do Niassa left the area (1929), describes the process through which a child could become a personal slave in Ibo and, possibly, elsewhere. Often in Ibo, poor people could request shelter from a wealthy family. She said: "If a woman had been servant in a home and died in pregnancy, the child could thus be brought up as a personal slave by the family for whom the servant had been working..." Or... if a woman in extreme poverty had requested to be fed by a wealthy family in times of famine when she could not support herself, she might leave her child to that family as compensation".[24] In other words, leaving behind a child in compensation for having been supported was considered a matter of fact that could not possibly be avoided due to famine or extreme hardship. In such poor conditions, people sometimes discovered advantages in having to work as slaves for the wealthy, even though it meant assuming the status of slaves. Memories of this make the point that slaves in a home were protected (albeit they risked abuse) but they could certainly survive in contexts of hardship by finding food, work and shelter. This kind of dependency status was very different from that one would encounter in the event of being raided, brought by a caravan from the interior and, thereafter, in all likelihood, sold.

Protection against raids and famine seemed to be a priority at the turn of the Twentieth century. Ali Omari, born in 1933 and considered among the elders of the island, says: "In those days people lived in fear and were taken advantage of, but when they took refuge in the compounds (quintais) they felt at ease; they did not care about the

[23] Interviews with: Rubio Osman, Ibo 11 sett 2008, rub 1b pg 11; Antonio Baptista, Ibo, 5 September 2009; Hawa Athumani, Ibo 11 September 2008.
[24] Interview with Hawa Athumani, Ibo 2008. All the names of the people interviewed are fictitious to respect their privacy.

money, but cared about security".[25] Being the nephew of an African grandmother who had a child of a wealthy man of Ibo, his knowledge comes from stories passed down within his extended family.

Some other memories follow the same line. For instance, a seventy-year-old man, child of a slave woman, who was a servant in a very wealthy family was not particularly concerned about his "poor destiny"; rather, he was proud of having enjoyed a high quality of life (in that context) in an affluent home (Declich, 2015). Mother and child had stayed on as servants in the home and were considered "people of that quintal". This testimony questions the usual assumptions about the undesirable status of those slaves who, after abolition, continued working as servants in the same home in which they - or their relatives - had been slaves. Apparently, there were some advantages in being part of the people of the quintal, when they were employed in one way or another by the family of the former masters of their ancestors.

The production of this kind of memories and the perception of slavery which lies behind them must be related to at least two factors: first, there were many cases of children born by women of the quintal and fathered by males of the master's family[26] or even by the acquaintances of the family.[27] Should a girl of a quintal become pregnant by a man from another quintal, she might be transferred to that man's quintal and, later, some of her children sent back to work in the quintal she had left in order to replace her labor.[28]

Considering that Muslim people, based part of the control of the trading area on serial marriages[29] also certain Christians, notwithstanding their spiritual leaders' teachings were unwilling to pass up this opportunity. Mixed children were often included in the household, albeit not all with the same rank as the offspring of the actual wife, but sometimes at the level of very trustworthy servants, servants of a special kind. In this way, the island of Ibo and some of the surrounding areas - where in the nineteenth century the Christian aristocrats of the northern areas of Cabo Delgado concentrated - developed a peculiar social texture. The social group of the house, in a sort of very extended family stratified by rank, also included people born within the quintal. Some of those individuals were, in fact, slaves, but some of those slaves, being also children of one man of the family, might become part of a group with somewhat higher status than their fellows (within the social stratification than otherwise slaves). Were the pregnancy result from the husband of a family, the chance that a child might be included depended also on the tolerance of the wife who could insist that both the woman and child to be sent away.[30]

[25] Interview Ali Omari, Ibo sett 2008, pg. 5-6.
[26] In the Ibo Island, and in some of the surrounding villages, European people were Christian. Christian men could not marry more than one woman, nor should, according to their Christian ethics, have lovers. Yet, priests of the parishes of the area at the end of the nineteenth century complained all the time that Christian people did not marry but lived with concubines.
[27] Ali Omari, Ibo 15 November 2014 and other sources.
[28] Ruben Osman, 11 September 2008.
[29] See for instance, the shariif all over the coast of the Indian Ocean or the Muslim traders as described by. The assertion is also based on an Interview with Mohamed, Ibo 13 September 2013.
[30] Paulinha Peres, Ibo 12 September 2013.

In addition, the children born in the quintal from slaves of the quintal were considered more educated, which, in this case, meant being better able to live in an urbanized context, more suitable for employment in the family business, unlike slaves recently acquired through trade with the hinterland. Those coming from the hinterland were the slaves to be sold; yet the youngest of these could be more attractive for local use as they could be brought up from childhood to acquire an urban mindset and to behave in the "educated" way expected by their masters.

Children of Ibo and miscegenation

The social stratification in Ibo was therefore far more complicated than a simple division between rich owners and the others. As a result of their commitment to sea trading, for centuries the Island of Ibo in particular, but also some of the other Querimbas islands, have hosted inhabitants of widely diverse origin – Asian, African, European.

Since the end of the nineteenth century, it has been clear that in the Island of Ibo a social stratum had developed based on individuals who had a dark skin and were more educated than the general, black-skinned population of those days, possibly literate, but whose origins were among African people. This is the social stratum which in other Portuguese colonies is called the filhos da terra (Candido, 2012, pp. 65–84). This social layer was also pointed out by governors such as De Vilhena who mentioned them as filhos de Ibo; they were considered trustworthy and were regarded as better educated and adjusted to the European lifestyle than other African people of the island. Not all of them were, in fact, educated but certainly they had the chance to be initiated from childhood into the higher echelons of the urban social life of the island. They were considered to enjoy a social status superior to that of other Africans and servants.

As Ali Omari reported, "All the white people who lived here in Ibo had black families, I have a white family which is in Portugal, too".[31] There was obviously a process of miscegenation that resulted in this stratum of people, a process which is also recognized by today's inhabitants of Ibo.

What sort of interaction took place between the filhos de Ibo and the servants? According to Thomaz, at the turn of the twentieth century, natives of Ibo (mwani by language) living in the indigenous boroughs did not wish to work for the filhos de Ibo in a menial capacity and preferred to leave such work for servants migrating to Ibo from the continent. Maybe, those natives of Ibo feared harsh treatment which in the view of the filhos de Ibo befitted servants and in that of the mwani immigrants from the continent (Thomaz, 2012, p.187). There are also cases of people who escaped the position of servants without being able to quit their lowly status. This shows another level of social stratification which existed on the island whereby those who had been socialized to the island's domestic work system preferred, if at all possible, to stay with the richer quintals of higher-class patrons.

If at the beginning of the Twentieth century, "the social position of all Africans who lived in the island was directly related to notions of proximity and distance from the condition of slave" (Thomaz, 2012, p. 189), nowadays, present memories reveal a different perception. The most recent events of forced labor, as well as the repression of political dissent by the pre-independence Portuguese

[31] Ali Omari, Ibo 11 September 2008, p.3.

government, come to the fore as crueler and less desirable than servitude ever was. The experience of being people of the quintal in wealthy quintals is, in a way, re-evaluated as compared to such later experiences of repression and conscription to labor.

The comparison between the abuses perpetrated through forcing people to work and those committed through slavery helps to highlight the extent to which the conceptualization of freedom is not separable from forms of dependence. On the contrary, when indiscriminate power to force people to work was granted and enforced by the Portuguese state, then entanglement with the right network of people on whom to be dependent could become an opportunity rather than a hindrance.

Slaves and servants

In the living memories I collected in Mozambique between 2008 and 2016, there is no clear distinction between slaves and servants; people tend to conflate these two categories who both worked (i.e. slaves and servants) for affluent families and were considered "people of the quintal" (Declich, 2015, 631-633). An important issue in this regard is that, following the slavery abolition decrees for Mozambique (1875), domestic slaves had to work for their masters until 1878, but even later ended up becoming domestic servants (Rodrigues, 2008; Allina, 2012; Declich, 2015).

At the end of the nineteenth century, following an edict of March 28th 1894, some pieces of paper, hand-written and signed by owners or patrons, served as a sort of identity paper which the servants had to show if they were stopped for a check on their status and some patrons solicited passports to avoid their servants from being disturbed by soldiers.[32]

As anybody who was a vagrant could be obliged to work by law, people with no specific occupation could be conscripted to forced labor of several kinds. People could be stopped on the streets and, if they were unemployed, or could not prove they had an occupation, could be detained.

In such a context, the fact of being employed as servants by the former master (now patron) even though possibly not receiving a salary, still shielded the servants from being conscripted to forced labor and, to a certain extent, from being abused as the patron was responsible for them. This protection was a deterrent against forced labor for men. For women servants the situation was different as their status as servants was not always strong enough to protect young female servants from abuse. This appears clear from a case which came before the court of Ibo concerning a twelve-year-old servant by the name of Muito Obrigada. Her name indicates that she was a former slave, or at least named as such, now a servant. Muito Obrigada was sent by her patron to fetch water from the well of a house and while doing so was raped by the house owner. The fact that her case came to court in 1920 suggests that her membership of a quintal granted her some sort of protection as her patron had decided to take legal action, although, apparently, cases concerning servants did not lead to real punishments for the abusers[33].

Through the law on vagrant people, the state guaranteed the Portuguese and/or the moradores that they could keep using local manpower. If people were considered

[32] AHM - Cabo Delgado – Governo de Distrito – Cx. 11 – 1894.

[34] AHM Conselho de Cabo Delgado no Ibo, Juizo de Direito da Comarca, cx. 24, Ano: 1920, Autocrime, no. 462 (acusado: Ludovico dos Santo Carrilho) in (Thomaz, 2012, p. 193)

'vagrant', which sometimes coincided with not being related to a certain patron, they were redirected by the state as manpower for factories (like sisal production) or a work force to work for other purposes.

In theory, a servant should have been paid; yet there is not enough information to know to what extent this actually happened for most of the servants, but it is reported that many did not receive a salary.[34] A woman interviewed in Ibo remembered that some were not paid and lived in the household as "children of the house, family members"; this - she considered - eventually turned in their favor when the masters died or left for Portugal for they remained in their masters homes.[35] There is a court case from 1952 that indicates that even as late as in the mid-twentieth century it could happen that the servant himself did not expect any real payment. In 1952 Carlos, son of an old slave of a family, was still performing domestic service for the family in which he was born. During the court case for his divorce, the judges discovered that he had never been paid in cash, only in kind: he worked in exchange for food, clothes and shelter. The court sentenced the patron to pay all the arrears he was entitled to but, surprisingly, Carlos did not feel he had a right to receive the money and gave the amount back to his patron.[36] His decision to return the money may have been motivated by any number of considerations – perhaps he was in debt to his patron - but the fact remains that he had not claimed a salary before the case came to court. Either he considered he was not entitled to a salary, or he had been too afraid to ask for one.

If it is not clear whether those servants were, in fact, paid for their work, it is, however, certain that holding the status of servant, especially for males, entailed the important benefit of being shielded from recruitment as forced laborers. This point was made by a slave woman's son who had worked and lived as a servant in a prosperous family in Arimba.[37] Those who were servants had a special pass that gave them immunity from being detained whenever they encountered police or other government officials along the road. In other words, the pass allowed them to travel from one village to another without being harassed. It reflected a paternalistic idea, implying that only the patron was to punish his/her servants. If the servant committed any crimes, even minimal, these were dealt with first by the patron (Thomaz 2012, p. 180).

It is not really known to what extent domestic slaves, and later servants, were badly treated in the homes, although there are some court cases, like the one mentioned above, which show that servants were sometimes abused. One oral testimony claims that offenders were punished with hot irons.[38] In 1907 eight-year-old António, who was mistreated by the father-in-law of his patron, Jorge de Souza, ran away. Once he was found and brought back, Jorge de Souza beat him, and he was found bleeding. His case was reported and ended up in court [39].

Among the worst things recalled in collective memories about the slaves/servants are: first, the fact that they were

[34] De Vilhena, 1905, p. 224-228.
[35] Paulinha Peres, Ibo 14 September 2013.
[36] AHM – Concelho de Cabo Delgado no Ibo, Juizo de Direito da Comarca, cx. 86 e 89, Ano: 1924 e 1925, Auto-crime, n.º 513 e 573 (acusado: José Araújo da Cunha) in Thomaz, 2012, p. 188.
[37] Rubio Anli, Arimba, 7 August 2015. Names are fictitious/imaginary to protect the privacy of the interviewees.
[38] Ali Omari, Ibo 11 September 2008, p. 1.
[39] AHM – Concelho de Cabo Delgado no Ibo, Juizo de Direito da Comarca, cx. 78, Ano: 1897, Autocrime, n.º 283 (acusado: Antonio Paiva Soares) in Thomaz, 2012, pp. 185–86.

mandados, "ordered to do", meaning that they did not decide themselves what to do and they had to follow orders; second, that they had to do menial work, even the most unpleasant (reference); third, that they had personal names, which were not real personal names but phrases that marked their status as slaves. Some had names like: Naona nani (Who do you see?), Jinalako (What is your name?), Awonanini (Who can see?), Avinammoja (Does not have one), Sina makosa (Without fault), Alcunha;[40] hence the name of Muito obrigada (I thank you very much), indicates a girl born of a slave or bought as a slave. The slaves were ordered to perform some errands at other wealthy people's homes, but they could only speak to the slaves of that homeowner who would then relay the message to their master.

A Mix of Memories

Memories of slavery gathered in the first decade of the twenty-first century tend to be imprecise regarding the legal status of slaves, servants, or forros (which means people who had been granted alforria)[41] as local witnesses do not refer to differences of status. All those in domestic service are usually remembered as slaves, in anyway, people belonging to the compound (quintal) of a richer person.[42] They were all part of the gente do quintal (people of the compound) who performed domestic duties for richer households and depended on them at major milestones in their lives. For instance, on the occasion of weddings and initiation rituals they informed their patron who then financed part of the ceremonies. All in all, there seems to have been no strong differentiation in collective memories between the status of domestic slave, freed slave,[43] or servant. Consequently, it can be assumed that, despite the new opportunities people would have after abolition, such as, a recognized salary for their work, the chance of living in a different place from the one chosen by the owner, or the possibility of changing job, a social stratification in which the lower order was still regarded as designated for service persisted.

In Ibo at the end of the nineteenth and throughout the twentieth century social relations between slaves, servants and masters were of a particular kind. Servants developed special obligations and rights within the quintal of their original master. Even when a servant was no longer working for the original owner, they maintained a relationship with the people of their quintal (Declich, 2015; Thomaz, 2012, pp. 184-185). This made the quintal a specific social space, granting network of relationships, protection but also entailing duties and obligations, even after abolition. De Vilhena mentions the children of slaves who, though free at the time of his observations, would nonetheless continue to carry out the orders of their mothers' former master (De Vilhena, 1905, pp. 228–31). In 1914 a judicial case heard in Ibo reports that Lady Tereza ordered her servant, Ametraque, to punish some boys who had disturbed her two female servants who were swimming in the sea.[44] Those servants were sometimes considered part of the family and sometimes the property of the master. In any case, even if

40 Ali Omari, interview Ibo 15 November 2014; Rubio Osman, 11 September 2008.
41 This means enfranchisement, granted according to regulations which changed over across the time.
42 For a more in-depth discussion of what "people of the quintal (i.e. compound)" meant, see (Declich, 2015, 631-633).
43 The legal status of freed slave has changed along the time but did not mean becoming free as any other person born free. See on this issue
44 AHM – Concelho de Cabo Delgado no Ibo, Juizo de Direito da Comarca, cx. 83, Ano: 1914, Auto- crime, n.º s/n (acusados: Thereza Portugal Carrilho e Souza, Benjamin Caetano de Souza e Ametraque), in Thomaz (2012), p. 183.

the servants were considered somehow part of the family, the patrons perpetuated their inferior, dependent status, as members of the people of the quintal. Indeed, in some cases, servants also became part of the family because, as mentioned earlier, masters had children by their female slaves and servants and the offspring of those relationships could be included in the master's family. The latter, even if on occasions they were not considered full family members, were assigned higher roles among the servants (Thomaz, 2012, p. 187; Declich, 2015). There are also cases of children who were treated as the main offspring because the woman of the household could not bear children.[45] Therefore, belonging to a certain quintal, though it identified one as belonging to a social stratum that was considered inferior, nevertheless ensured access to a network of contacts which brought one into relationship with the wealthier echelons of society – a relationship that could be very useful in later life, and therefore highly valued. Not all slaves could boast having and making use of such relationship; certainly, not the slaves who were brought from the hinterland for sale. This could explain why, even after the slavery abolition decrees, people of the quintal might prefer to follow the previous owner in certain activities, even if it meant foregoing a salary for a while, rather than accepting short-term salaried employment with Portuguese businessmen or officers. At the beginning of the twentieth century, De Vilhena reports the case – which he interprets as evidence of the persistence of slavery in the area - of a sailor who preferred to leave a paid job and commit himself to the unremunerated business of his mother's former owners (De Vilhena, 1905, pp. 228–31).

Conclusions

The memories of slavery on Ibo Island and among the Zigula communities of the Juba River in Somalia are evidently the result of other forms of labor exploitation and oppression imposed after abolition which have been remembered and encoded in collective memory and compared with slavery. In Ibo, it appears as more brutal than slavery itself while among the southern Somali communities they have conflated as if they were all the same, they have been telescoped (Declich, 2002, 236-237, 242).

The collection of memories presented here for the Mozambican island concern the kind of slavery experienced in the domestic context of the quintal in Ibo thus, it regards the treatment reserved for people who worked for rich owners in their own home. Conditions and treatment of slaves could be very different depending in which context slaves lived and had to serve.

In this specific social context, the value people give to freedom is closely bound up with questions of poverty, wealth, opportunities and the social networks available. Freedom is always related to some form of dependence; it is not its opposite. Dependence and its different forms never occur in a vacuum and are relative to what can be done otherwise in isolation. In the context of Ibo, evidently, where some wealth passed through the richer households, ties with the wealthy people could lead to a higher standard of living than disentanglement from dependency ties and lack of personal kinship network.

Slavery along the Juba in southern Somalia was too distant from the people interviewed and thus memories worked

[45] A man described his experience in an interview. He was even sent to school which was uncommon for black children. João Antonio, Ibo, September 2011.

differently; firsthand testimonials could only recall experiences of forced labor. When talking about slavery, usually memories conflated with events occurred at the time when the farmers, descendants of free or freed (liberti) people, were conscripted to work in farms either for the Italian colonists (before 1941) or under the British Military Administration (from 1941 to 1960). The people interviewed lived in an area that had been inhabited by maroon people for more than a hundred years and thus the direct experience of slavery or servantry was a distant event. The farmers, on the other hand, still suffered the discrimination against descendants of slaves from the perspective of the stratification of the southern Somali society, but they had not specific memories of enslavement. The Somali society of the last decades of the twentieth century was marked by a division in habash and bilis, namely commoners and nobles (Helander 1988), in where commoners were usually more or less distant descendants from former slaves (Luling 1971) but thereafter mostly integrated in patron-clients relationships (Declich, 2020).

In the examined case of Ibo and the Querimbas, men who found themselves entirely free of ties to slave labor due to abolition regulations, if not otherwise employed, could be conscripted to forced labor. The possibility of working with previous masters was often seen as a safer option than being left completely independent and, as such, at the mercy of the Portuguese government (which enforced recruitment of vagrants). Those who were treated badly by one patron tried to find another whom they judged to be better (Thomaz, 2012, p. 186).

When requested to describe slavery the interviewee would recall memories of the most recent repression operated by the Portuguese government in the 1970s as a really negative experience, yet not overlapping with that of the earlier period of slavery. The present reassessment of slavery in the collective memories may also be related to the fact that after independence, and following the 20/24 hours order,[46] most of the previous patrons had to leave Ibo in a hurry and the local inhabitants basically stayed with or occupied the property of the previous owner. Some of the dependents were entrusted with the care of their houses by the patrons. People can testify to the relevance of miscegenation and of the existence of families which included both black and white people, although those considered black members of the household and those deemed white did not enjoy the same status.[47] Thus, the present position of those Mozambican families who have "white" families in Portugal has come to be privileged, or at least holds some comparative advantages when set against African people who do not have "white" families in Europe. But again, having families in Europe denotes access to a larger network which is what is valued. We do not know if collective memories would have seen slavery retrospectively as a relatively positive status if the

[46]This was an operation enforced in post-Independence Mozambique which obliged the Portuguese to leave in twenty-four hours with a 20 kg baggage allowance (and carrying twenty kg of baggage) (Pitcher, M. Anne 2002, p. 47).

[47]The concept of whiteness is historically constructed. As discussed elsewhere, at the end of the eighteenth century the wealth of a lineage or family was more valued than the perceived color of the skin and the word msungu, nowadays used for "white", indicated rather a style of dressing and a wealth status (reference).

previous patrons were still present on the island and if those considered vagrants had not been sent to forced labor during colonial times.

Nowadays one kind of relationship between members of families residing in Europe and those in Africa is maintained, for instance, through the exchange of food: distant relatives in Africa are paid to send specific local foods to Europe where they are not otherwise available. Although people have occupied the stone houses of the previous inhabitants, the general wealth in the island has not increased after the Portuguese left in the Seventies. On the contrary, the interviewees' perception is that the standard of living has decreased substantially since 1974.

In conclusion, collective memories (Halbwach, 1992) about slavery tend to fade away unless there are special reasons to keep them. In addition, different social groups within the brokers who construct the collective memories may have different vested interests in maintaining or forgiving certain events. Certainly, in both cases, in southern Somalia and northern Mozambique memories of abuses seem stronger if they are less distant in time and when those who underwent the experience are alive. In southern Somalia, notwithstanding the lack of firsthand oral sources on the actual condition of the enslaved descendants, there are good reasons for the Zigula runaways to remark that slavery was as harsh as forced labor: this justifies the reasons why their ancestors decided to escape from slavery more than two hundred years ago and also clarifies that the group never entered in relationship with the former masters as clients. The descendants of slaves in the Ibo Islands found themselves in a very different condition. Had they been born in the quintal they did not really have affordable and safe places where to go other than the island; moreover, the life conditions in the quintal, as clarified by several witnesses, ensured a safer livelihood unlike the life in the terra firme facing the Querimbas (Declich 2015).

Finally, memories of slavery reflect the different facets that enslaved dependent labor took in different areas as well as the interests of the social groups who reproduce them and should prompt further revision of the Western ideals of freedom. Enslaved labor and the legacy of it in more recent dependent labor forms must be seen as intertwined with the socio-economic contexts in which they occurred and as pervaded by extreme poverty in which interdependence and network have always been crucial to protection, survival and to maintaining a good quality of life.

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